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Message Text

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61
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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TRSE-00 OMB-01 AID-05 COME-00 AGRE-00 HEW-04 OES-06

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P R 031929Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8712
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
USSOUTHCOM
AMCONSUL BARRANQUILLA
AMCONSUL CALI
AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PINS, PGOV, ECON, EGEN, CO
SUBJ: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. FORMER AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON JULIO CESAR TURBAY FORMALLY ANNOUNCED HIS CANDIDACY FOR THE 1978 LIBERAL PARTY PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION. MEANWHILE, THE SPLIT IN THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY BECAME MORE PRONOUNCED AS ONE OF THE TWO MAJOR FACTIONS ANNOUNCED PLANS TO BOYCOTT THE PARTY'S DECEMBER 3 CONVENTION. THE SUPREME COURT STRUCK DOWN PROVISIONS FOR MILITARY CONVICTION AND SENTENCING OF CIVILIANS CONTAINED IN TWO DECREES ISSUED UNDER THE STATE OF SIEGE. THE COST OF LIVING JUMPED TO AN ANNUAL RATE OF 24.7 PERCENT, PROMPTING GOC LIBERALIZATION OF FOOD IMPORTS. COLOMBIANIZATION OF PHARAMACEUTICAL FIRMS IS ONCE AGAIN UNDER STUDY. END SUMMARY.

2. TURBAY LAUNCHES CANDIDACY. FORMER AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON JULIO CESAR TURBAY AYALA FORMALLY ANNOUNCED HIS CANDIDACY
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FOR THE 1978 LIBERAL PARTY PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION DURING

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A LARGE RECEPTION IN HIS HONOR IN BOGOTA NOV 30. IN
HIS SPEECH HE PROCLAIMED A "GREAT DEMOCRATIC BATTLE" TO RESCUE
COLOMBIA FROM IMMORALITY AND CRIME, WHICH THREATEN TO
UNDERMINE DEMOCRATICINSTITUTIONS. THE MAIN THEME OF HIS
UPCOMING CAMPAIGN, HE SAID, WOULD BE THE TOPICS TO BE UNDER-
TAKEN BY THE PROJECTED CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY. TO GUARANTEE
WIDESPREAD PARTICIPATION IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS HE WOULD
INVITE QUALIFIED PERSONS TO DEVELOP PROPOSALS (FOR REFORMING
THE DEPARTMENTS AND THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM) TO BE CONSIDERED BY
THE CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY. AT WEEK'S END HE TOOK TO THE
HUSTINGS, THIS TIME TO MEDELLIN. MEANWHILE, HIS PROBABLE
PRINCIPAL OPPONENT FOR THE LIBERAL PARTY NOMINATION, FORMER
PRESIDENT CARLOS LLEGAS, HAS REMAINED UNUSUALLY SILENT SINCE
RETURNING FROM A PROLONGED STAY IN EUROPE. OTHER PARTY
STALWARTS, HEADED BY REPRESENTATIVE HERNANDO AGUDELO VILLA,
BEGAN A THREE-DAY MEETING IN BUCARAMANGA DEC 3 TO
PHILOSOPHIZE ON CURRENT ISSUES, AND PROBABLY TO FOCUS ATTENTION
ON HIS OWN POTENTIAL CANDIDACY.

3. CONSERVATIVE PARTY TROUBLES. SINCE LOSING THE 1974
PRESIDNTIAL ELECTION, CONSERVATIVE PARTY LEADERS HAVE MADE
EXTENSIVE EFFORTS TO MAINTAN PARTY UNITY. HOWEVER, DIFFERENCES
BETWEEN THE ALVARO GOMEZ WING AND THE OSPINA-PASTRANA WING
HAVE FINALLY CME TO A HEAD. ON THE EVE OF THE PARTY'S
CONVENTION ON DEC 3, THE ALVARISTAS ANNOUNCED THEY
WOULD NOT ATTEND WHEN THEIR PROPOSAL FOR A PRE-CONVENTION
AGREEMENT ON THE COMPOSITION OF THE NEW PARTY DIRECTORATE
WAS REJECTED BY THE OTHER GROUP. THE OSPINISTA-PASTRANISTAS
SAID THEY WOULD GO AHEAD WITH THE CONVENTION, DURING
WHICH THEY ARE EXPECTED TO APPROVE A RESOLUTION OPPOSING
PRESIDNT LOPEZ' PROPOSAL FOR A CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY.
THE ALVARISTA CONGRESSMEN, WHO HAVE BEEN GENERALLY PRO-GOVERNMENT,
ANNONCED THEY WOULD VOTE FOR THE CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY NO
MATTER WHAT THE CONVENTION DECIDED. WHILE THE DISPUTE APPEARS
SERIOUS, AND THE PARTY IS THREATENED WITH DIVISION, WE BELIEVE
THE GROUPS WILL EVENTUALLY GET BACK TOGETHER. PARTY LEADERS
HAVE LONG RECOGNIZED THAT THEIR ONLY HOPE FOR 1978 IS TO REMAN
UNITED. LAST DECEMBER, THE LIBERAL PARTY WENT THROUGH A
SIMILAR EXPERIENCE WHEN TWO OF THE PARTY'S FACTIONS WALKED
OUT OF THAT PARTY'S CONENTION. THE LIBERALS LATER REACHED AN
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AGREEMENT TO SOFT-PEDAL THEIR DIFFERENCES IN ORDER TO AVOID
SPLITTING. SO FAR THAT ACCORD HAS HELD TOGETHER.

4. SUPREME COURT WEAKENS TWO STATE OF SIEGE DECREES. THE
SUPREME COURT DECLARED UNCONSTITUTIONAL PORTIONS OF TWO DECREES
ISSUED BY THE GOVERNMENT UNDER THE CURRENT STATE OF SIEGE.
DECREE 2194 PROHIBITED THE MANUFACTURE, SALE, AND POSSESSION
OF ARMS AND AMMUNITION AND GAVE MILITARY OFFICERS OF THE RANK

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OF CAPTAIN AND ABOVE POWER TO CNVICT VIOLATORS AND IMPOSE
SENTENCES OF UP TO THREE YEARS BY MEANS OF VERBAL COURTS
MARTIAL. DECREE 2195 PROHIBITED DEMONSTRATIONS WITHOUT
PERMITS, RIOTS, WALL POSTERS INCITING DISORDER, AND THE
POSSESSION OF OBJECTS USABLE FOR COMMITTING THE AFOREMENTIONED
INFRACTIONS, AND AGAIN GAVE THE MILITARY THE POWER TO IMPOSE
SENTENCES, IN THIS CASE OF UP TO 180 DAYS. THE COURT HELD
THAT THE PFOHIBITIONS CONTAINED IN THE DECREES WERE ACCEPTEABLE
BUT THAT THE PROCEDURE FOR IMPOSING PUNISHMENT WAS UNCONSTITUTIONAL
SINCE IT DID NOT ALLOW FOR DUE PROCESS. CIVIL COURTS WILL NOW
HANDLE CASES UNDER DECREES 2194 AND 2195 AND MANY OBSERVERS
VIEW THIS AS REMOVING THE TEETH FROM THE PROHIBITIONS.

5. FURTHER INCREASE IN COST OF LIVING. THE CONSUMER PRICE INDEX
(CPI) FOR WORKERS TOOK A SHARP UPWARD TURN IN NOVEMBER BRINGING
THE ANNUAL RATE OF INFLATION TO 24.7 PERCENT WITH EXPECTATIONS
THAT IT WILL REACH 26 PERCENT BY THE END OF THE YEAR. THE NOVEMBER
INCREASE WAS LARGELY ATTRIBUTABLE TO FOOD PRICES WHICH INCREASED
BY 3.4 PERCENT. SINCE FOOD PRICES FLUCTUATE IN BOTH DIRECTIONS,
THE NOVEMBER INCREASE IN THE COST OF LIVING DOES NOT NECESSARILY
SIGNAL A RENEWAL OF A LONGER TERM UPWARD MOVEMENT IN THE RATE OF
THE CPI INCREASE. LAST WEEK, THE GOVERNMENT, IN ANTICIPATION
OF THE UPWARD MOVEMENT OF FOOD PRICES, LIBERALIZED IMPORTS ON
MOST BASIC FOOD ITEMS UNDERGOING PRICE INCREASES. THE
EFFECT OF THE LIBERALIZATION IS PRIMARILY PSYCHOLOGICAL, PUTTING
PRODUCERS ON NOTICE THAT TOO RAPID PRICE INCREASES WILL BRING
EVEN MORE RAPID IMPORT LIBERALIZATION. ADDITIONAL MEASURES
WERE PROMISED WHICH WOULD SIGNIFICANTLY LIBERALIZE IMPORTS
OF WHEAT, CACAO, CORN AND SORGHUM AND WHICH WOULD CONTROL
MEAT EXPORTS.

6. COLOMBIANIZATION OF PHARMACEUTICAL FIRMS UNDER STUDY.
A COMMISSION OF THE CHAMBER OF REPRESENTATIVES BEGAN STUDY
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OF DRAFT LEGISLATION WHICH COULD LEAD TO COLOMBIANIZATION OF
ANY NEW INVESTMENT IN THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY, OVER 90
PERCENT OF WHICH IS CONTROLLED BY FOREIGN-OWNED COMPANIES.
SIMILAR COLOMBIANIZATION LEGISLATION WAS INTRODUCED IN THE
SENATE LAST YEAR BUT DIED IN COMMITTEE. INDUSTRY
SOURCES SEE LITTLE CHANCE OF THE PROJECT BECOMING LAW DURING
THIS SESSION OF CONGRESS, PARTICULARLY SINCE IT LACKS DIRECT
SUPPORT FROM THE ADMINISTRATION.
SANCHEZ

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